



1999 Session Report

State Representative
Mike Carrell • 28th District

Representing Anderson Island, Fircrest, Lakewood, Steilacoom,
part of Tacoma, Tillicum and University Place

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

I hope you're enjoying the longer days and nicer weather during these summer months.

Though the 49-49 tie of Republicans and Democrats in the House of Representatives made for some interesting discussions during the most recent legislative session, we were able to reach agreement on many key issues.

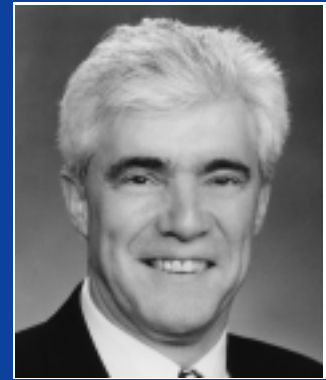
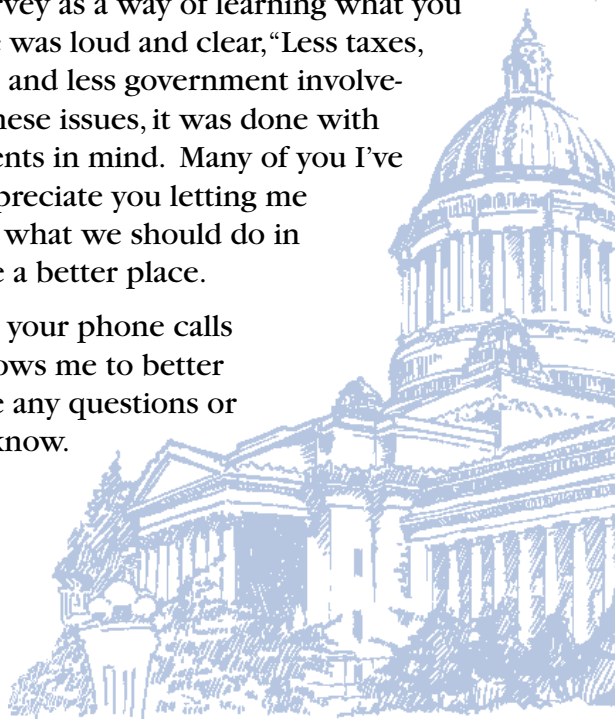
Halfway through the session, I was appointed as co-chair of the House Judiciary Committee. This appointment carried special meaning to me, as I became the first non-attorney in 20 years to head the committee. I shared the gavel with my democrat counterpart and through my position was able to improve several school safety bills as they worked through the process. Please note the special school safety section inside.

Inside you'll also find the results of the survey I sent earlier this year. I offered this survey as a way of learning what you thought and your message was loud and clear, "Less taxes, less government spending and less government involvement." When I voted on these issues, it was done with your thoughts and comments in mind. Many of you I've talked to directly and I appreciate you letting me know what you think and what we should do in Olympia to make our state a better place.

As always, I appreciate your phone calls and letters. Your input allows me to better represent you. If you have any questions or comments, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Mike



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Judiciary, co-chair

Children and Family Services

Finance



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GUN STORAGE LAWS — WHITNEY GRAVES

Easily the most controversial issue I was directly involved in this year, was a gun storage measure known as the Whitney Graves bill. It was named after a Marysville girl who was killed when a playmate found a loaded gun and fired it at her. The bill's supporters intended to hold gun owners liable in the event a child gains possession of a loaded, unsecured firearm.

My concerns were with the actual language and structure of the bill itself. It was also apparent that very few people bothered to read the bill, or understand how it would interact with current law. I did read it and quite frankly, the bill wouldn't have done what many people said it would.

First of all, passage of the bill would have *weakened* the current reckless endangerment statute by granting prosecutors the option to decline to prosecute a fatality or injury resulting from irresponsible gun storage. To quote directly from the bill:

"If a death or serious injury occurs as a result of an alleged violation of subsection (2) of this section, the prosecuting attorney may decline to prosecute, even though technically sufficient evidence to prosecute exists, in situations where prosecution would serve no public purpose, would defeat the purpose of the law in question, or would result in decreased respect for the law."

Secondly, it would have made it less likely that anyone would be charged with reckless endanger-

ment if the bill passed. See the chart below, which compares a parent's liability under current law with their liability if the Whitney Graves bill had passed.

I am in the process of looking at all gun laws relating to minors and will attempt to craft a consistent set of reasonable standards. The current patchwork of statutes are confusing to everyone and need to be rewritten so people can actually understand what the laws are intended to accomplish.

CRIMINAL LIABILITY OF PARENT FOR CHILD'S POSSESSION OF FIREARM				
Age of Child	Parent liable without parental permission		Parent liable with parental permission	
	Under current law	If Whitney Graves were enacted	Under current law	If Whitney Graves were enacted
0-7	YES	YES	POSSIBLY*	NO
8-11	YES	YES	POSSIBLY*	NO
12-15	YES	YES	POSSIBLY*	NO
16-17	YES	NO	POSSIBLY*	NO
18-20	YES	NO	POSSIBLY*	NO

* if parental permission was "reckless"



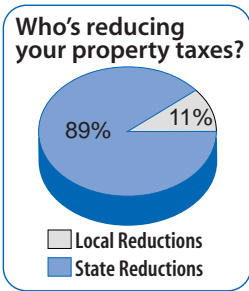
If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact my office and I will be happy to send additional information including a copy of the bill, current child gun laws and a non-partisan staff review of what impact this bill would have had on current law. **Toll-free: 1-800-562-6000**
To allow me to personally respond to your concerns, please include your name and telephone number.

Name: _____
Phone: _____

WHERE’S THE RELIEF?

I was very disappointed none of the eight (8) property tax measures I drafted — the basis for the House Republican Property Tax Reduction Plan — were even given a hearing by the Democrats who shared control of the Finance Committee. These bills were a culmination of my studies on property taxes over the last four years. Many of you offered suggestions and solutions and I appreciate that. It’s unfortunate those ideas were not given an opportunity to be heard in the legislative arena.

The bills will be introduced again next year. For a complete list, please contact my office.



SCHOOL SAFETY

SURVEY RESULTS

There have been several incidents of school violence around the nation in the past two years.

How important is the issue of school violence to you?

A. Very important 71%

B. Somewhat important 22%

C. Not important 7%

How should we increase funding for school security improvements?

A. Doesn’t require more funding 26%

B. Special school levy 5%

C. State general fund increase 23%

D. Prioritize current spending 45%

In response to several school shootings – even before the tragic events in Colorado – the Legislature was in the process of shoring up legislation to make schools safer for kids. As co-chair of the Judiciary Committee, I was able to work with sponsors of the bills and craft even better legislation.

As a retired teacher, I know first-hand that children cannot learn when they fear for their safety. Teachers cannot teach when they are being threatened. This is not just a “flavor of the month” issue. We will be back again in January with additional improvements.

School safety measures passed this year:

- Give teachers help and support in dealing with disruptive students in the classroom.
- Allow and encourage sharing of information between schools and law enforcement to do a better job of identifying and responding to students who pose a potential threat.
- Make 6- and 7-year-olds subject to truancy provisions and set up mechanisms to help get truant children back into schools.
- Require holding and evaluation of students who are arrested for possession of a firearm on school grounds.
- A total of \$6 million in the budget for alternative schools.
- Nearly \$9 million in the budget for security grants for hiring of school resource officers and purchasing safety equipment, such as two-way radios and cameras.

SURVEY RESULTS

In 1997, voters approved a measure (Referendum 47) which limits the growth in state and local property taxes to the rate of inflation. The law provides an exemption for local government to raise property taxes up to 6 percent if there is a “substantial need.” Under which circumstances would you agree that government should be allowed to raise property taxes above the rate of inflation?

- A. Whenever it’s deemed necessary 6%
- B. Only for emergencies and unforeseen events 23%
- C. Only by a vote of the people 52%
- D. Never 19%

In the last two years, the Legislature has permanently reduced the state property tax levy by 5 percent, placed limits on future increases in both state and local property taxes, and expanded property tax exemptions for seniors and people with disabilities. In your opinion, are property taxes:

- A. Too low 1%
- B. Somewhat fair and reasonable 42%
- C. Still too high 57%

The State Supreme Court struck down a proposal that would have limited increases in property assessments for tax purposes. The provision would have phased in property tax increases caused by sharp annual increases in property values. Would you support a constitutional amendment to allow “value averaging” so that sharp increases in property values would not result in large annual tax increases?

- A. Yes 78%
- B. No 22%

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THE REST OF THE SURVEY RESULTS

Earlier this year, many of you received a questionnaire from me asking for your opinions on issues ranging from property taxes to salmon recovery. After reviewing more than 1,000 responses (thank you), I thought you might like to see what your friends and neighbors think on various matters.

Your overwhelming (2-1) opinion on such matters as protecting the voter-approved spending limit Initiative 601 and keeping the 60 percent super-majority on property tax increases allowed me to stand firm and "vote my district" when votes came up related to those issues. I also appreciate — and share — your concern with the direction government is taking with your lives. Again, thank you for your responses.

TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Please join Rep. Talcott and myself at the Town Hall Meetings.

Thursday, July 22
7 p.m.

Lakewood Library
6300 Wildaire

Saturday, July 24
10 a.m.

University Place Senior Center
27th & Grandview
(former parks building in University Place)

SURVEY RESULTS

Considering the following areas, which do you believe are the three most significant issues facing our state? **THE TOP THREE RESPONSES WERE:**

Drugs and crime 52%
Taxes and spending 51%
K-12 public education 47%

Are you comfortable with the direction government is taking in your life?

Yes 31% No 69%

If government must be involved, I am most comfortable with

A. Federal 9%
B. State 31%
C. Local 59%

Initiative 601, passed by the voters in 1993, limits state government spending increases to the rate of inflation and population growth.

A. I support maintaining the spending limit 55%
B. The limit should be even lower 22%
C. I think the limit should be removed 7%
D. The limit should be exceeded in certain cases 15%

Recent elections have caused some to call for amending the state constitution to allow for a simple majority to pass school levies. Currently, 60 percent is needed.

I support requiring 50% approval 29%
I oppose lowering from 60% to simple majority 57%
I think the limit should be between 50 and 60% 14%